



Personal Reflections

3/13/2019

Dear IMSA Family,

Do you ever have those days when your heart is about to explode because it can't seem to contain all of the appreciation, pride (in a good sense), and overwhelming sense of blessing you feel? While I don't have these days all that often, mostly, I go day in and day out with a sense of appreciation for life, family, health, and security. On my best days, I feel joy and love, too. But, these past several weeks, my heart feels like it's going to explode with thankfulness.

By now, I hope that you know that for this Personal Reflection, I am going to write about all of the good things that are happening at IMSA. I would love it if this writing ignites, kick starts, or serves as a catalyst for you to share with me and each other all the positive things that are happening where you live, learn, and work.

Let's start with our students. You might have already heard and/or read many of these good news items, but hey, it's good news, so let's have some more!

- Madison Hahamy '19 is one of 200 teen journalists throughout the country powering "Since Parkland," a project that honors the lives of 1200 American children, babies to 18, who died in shootings one year after the massacre at the high school in Parkland, Florida.
- Erma Porter '19 won first place at the Illinois High School Art Competition held at the University of Saint Francis. She took Best of Show with her digital piece entitled, "Sadness 3.0."
- Akshaya Raghavan '19 and Amit Somalwar '19 were selected to the Fox Valley Leadership team, recognizing high school students who excel in volunteerism and community service.
- Jimmy Ren '19 is among 300 high school seniors that have been named scholars in the Regeneron Science Talent Search.
- Grace Sleyko '19 and Abigail Vanderploeg '19 presented about LEAD's data journalism elective at the Chicago Chapter of the American Statistical Association.
- Harry Smith '19 qualified and competed in the 100 freestyle and 100 backstroke at the IHSA State Swim meet.
- Kya Richardson '20 and Cassandra Kuissi '19 were recipients of the Martin Luther King Oratorical sponsored by Cathedral of Grace St. John Agape Committee.
- Shouri Bochetty '21 earned first place at the 2019 Chicago Brain Bee. Krishnachandra Nair '20 finished third.
- The National Merit® Scholarship Program named 34 finalists from IMSA in its 2019 competition. The finalists represent 24 different communities throughout Illinois.
- The IMSA speech team placed as a top four competitors in the Regionals and advanced to the Sectional Tournament.
- IMSA's Scholastic Bowl team won sectionals and placed 4th at National Academic Quiz Tournament state competition. They also earned first place at the Masonic Scholastic Bowl Sectional Championship.



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In less than 80 days, 198 of our students will walk the stage and become Alumni. Commencement is scheduled for Saturday, June 1, 2019 beginning at 3:30 p.m. at Northern Illinois University's Convocation Center in DeKalb.

Incidentally, I am thrilled that Professor Sylvester James Gates, Jr. accepted my invitation to speak at Commencement. Professor Gates is a theoretical physicist specializing in supersymmetry, supergravity, and superstring theory. In supergravity and supersymmetric representation theory, he also studies Adinkra symbols, which are graphical representations of supersymmetric algebras. He is a Ford Foundation Professor of Physics at Brown University and is a 2011 National Medal of Science Recipient.

In more good news, our Alumni continue to "advance the human condition" in multiple ways. For example:

- Tim Harms '92, one of the producers of "Skin," won the Oscar for Best Live Action Short.
- Julia Stamberger '92 launched her latest product, [Hope & Sesame Milk](#) on Amazon.com.
- Dr. Shilpa Iyer '98, Dr. Kerri Lockhart '95 and Dr. Anthony Nuval '98 shared their advice, career path trials and joys with IMSA students at a College and Career Choice Alumni panel sponsored by the Med Society and the IMSA Alumni Association. It was a special homecoming for an amazing trio of medical mentors.
- Shareese Pryor '04 has been named Chief of Civil Rights Bureau at the Illinois Attorney General's Office.
- Sabrina Gonzalez Pasterski '10 literally launched her first book, [Genius: 100](#), into space. It will be one of the only books to land and remain on the moon.
- Sam Walder '13 received backing from the LinkedIn CEO for his violin app, Trala. Sam raised \$1.29 million in seed funding for Trala. Follow Trala on social @TralaApp, visit their app page or go to their website at [trala.com](#).

Of course, our faculty and staff continue to create the conditions that ignite and nurture creative ethical, scientific minds. Some of the great news from IMSA employees includes:

- Our Biology Faculty, Dr. Jessica Archer, Dr. Sowmya Anjur, Dr. Don Dosch, Sarah O'Leary-Driscoll and Dr. Crystal Randall were notified that they were one of five to be a recipient of "The Excellence In Education Award" to be presented during the 2019 CTAUN (Committee on Teaching About the United Nations) Conference held at UN Headquarters in New York on April 5, 2019. Their project title was "Envisioning a Sustainable Urban Center Built Upon Biology Principles."
- Dr. Adrienne Coleman, Director of Equity and Inclusion, led national laboratory leaders and staff through a series of interactive activities aimed at identifying and interrupting implicit bias at the 2018 National Laboratory Directors' Council D&I Workshop.
- Dr. Lee Eysturlid, History Faculty, authored a new cover essay for ABC-CLIO website titled, "Supreme Court Revives Transgender Ban." He had also authored an earlier cover



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essay for the website, Modern World History, "The Post World War I World" commentary which was published November 20.

- Dr. Adam Kotlarczyk, English Faculty, was nominated for a 2019 Pushcart Prize. The Pushcart is an American literary prize published by Pushcart Press that honors the best poetry, short fiction, and essays published in the small presses over the previous year. His short story, "Farewell to Europe" was published and nominated by Fictive Dream.
- Christine Moskalik has been appointed to a three-year term as a member of the Informal Education Committee of the National Science Teachers Association. The NSTA promotes excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning for all.
- IMSA's PROMISE program, under the current direction of Dr. Anita White, was recognized by NCSSS as a 2018 Innovative Student Program nominee in the organization's 1Q 2019 issue of The Stem Edge magazine.

I was privileged to represent IMSA and the USA at the [2019 Worldwide Best Practices for Giftedness Conference](#) in Dubai, sponsored by the World Giftedness Center. I kicked off the conference with a keynote.

Finally, back to students...The week of March 4-8 was Clash of the Halls week. Congratulations to 1505 for winning Clash of the Halls for the 2018-2019 Academic Year!

I was reflecting on how Clash not only provides an outlet for our students' boundless energy, but it is also an opportunity for us to see their creativity, discipline, commitment to hard work...and all the fun they have!

Winners of the Week:

- 1501 - Talent Show
- 1502 - Obstacle Course
- 1503 - Hall Mural
- 1504 - Think Tank, Game Show, Senior Game, Riddles
- 1505 - Hall Movie, T-shirt Design
- 1506 - Wii Sports Resort, Profile Picture
- 1507 - Drill Team

For all of the above reasons, my heart is full, about to explode, with appreciation for our IMSA family: our students, our Alumni, our staff, including our faculty. And...our legislators who continue to support the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy!

Pay it forward! Share with me and with others what you are thankful for!

Respectfully,
José M. Torres, PhD
President



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P.S. Please join me in congratulating our very own, former Resident Counselor, Barbara Hernandez for being appointed to Representative Linda Chapa LaVia's vacant seat. Barbara is the new State Representative for the 83rd House District. Her official email address is Repbarbarahernandez@gmail.com.